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# 2016 Annual Report of the Competitive Skills Scholarship Program

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2016 Annual Report of the

# Competitive Skills Scholarship Program

Submitted by

Jeanne S. Paquette, Commissioner

Maine Department of Labor



*The Maine Department of Labor provides equal opportunity in employment and programs.  
Auxiliary aids and services are available to individuals with disabilities upon request.  
Programs are provided as a proud partner of the American Job Center network.*

**2016 Report**  
**of the**  
**Competitive Skills Scholarship Program**

Transmitted to:

Joint Standing Committee on Labor, Commerce, Research and Economic Development

by:

Jeanne S. Paquette, Commissioner

Maine Department of Labor

As Required by 26 MRSA §2033(10)



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# Executive Summary

The success of Maine's economy will ultimately be tied directly to the skill of our workforce. Maine's shrinking population and aging workforce combined with relatively low levels of education attainment and a workforce lacking the skills/qualifications desired by Maine's employers presents a serious challenge for Maine's present and future economy. The Competitive Skills Scholarship Program (CSSP) is a successful State funded program that is helping to move our workforce and economy forward.

The CSSP is open to all qualified Maine residents and pays for education/training and necessary support services for high-wage jobs in-demand in Maine. Individuals who qualify for the program must have a family income of 200 percent of federal poverty level or less and a desire to earn a marketable college degree or post-secondary occupational certificate that is considered to lead to high-wage and in-demand Maine occupations.

Following are some highlights of the CSSP program:

- **Improved financial security.** Successful CSSP completers earn more than unsuccessful trainees and significantly increase their opportunities for future advancement.
- **Increased wages.** The projected\* average starting wage of individuals who complete their CSSP training program with a college degree is \$20.50 per hour compared to their average wage of \$9.32 at entry to the program. It is expected that on average, successful completers of the program will more than double their earnings over time.
- **Relevant training for employers.** Healthcare is the largest employment sector in Maine and accounts for 45% of new jobs; 35 percent of CSSP trainees enter healthcare occupations at exit. CSSP is training individuals for in-demand jobs available in Maine.
- **Improved recession resiliency.** According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 84 percent of individuals with bachelor's degrees and 77 percent of individuals with associate's degrees in Maine are employed as compared to 70 percent of individuals with high school diplomas. College degrees help individuals find and retain employment; 60 percent of successful CSSP trainees exit the program with two- and four-year degrees.
- **Decrease in program costs.** Rule changes enacted in 2014 have decreased the average per-person CSSP costs from \$8,735 to \$7,609 in 2016.
- **Increased business engagement.** Businesses are finding it increasingly difficult to attract, retain and train the skilled workforce they need to be competitive. The innovative CSSP Business Program assists businesses to recruit and train staff for high-wage, in-demand jobs that require the upskilling of the workforce.
- **High school students supported to pursue degree programs.** CSSP Bridge Year students graduate from high school having a year of college courses behind them and CSSP funding and CareerCenter consultants to support them as they pursue a CSSP supported college degree on the CSSP approved high-wage in-demand occupations list.

\*projected hourly wage presented is based on the assumption that individuals are working 40 hours per week, 52 weeks of the year

CSSP is a successful program, helping to strengthen the Maine economy by helping businesses meet the demand for skilled workers while offering workers higher wages and better employment outcomes.

## Introduction

This report is being provided as required by the law establishing the Competitive Skills Scholarship Program (CSSP) and instructing the Maine Department of Labor (Department) to report on the status of the program and on any data that is collected to evaluate the program.<sup>1</sup>

The start of CSSP in November of 2007 came at a time in Maine when the effects of the national economic downturn began to impact employment levels.<sup>2</sup> This economic downturn lasted longer than any of the previous four recessions.<sup>3</sup> In Maine, employment declined further and longer than in previous recessions with its effects lingering long after its officially declared end in June 2009. Maine's economy regained its pre-recession levels of private-sector employment in 2016. Maine's economy has been considered to be at full employment as of early 2017, increasing the demand for workers.

CSSP provides displaced workers and the working poor an opportunity to earn credentials leading to good paying jobs that are in demand by Maine employers. Employers report that finding the skilled workforce they need to fill their job openings is becoming increasingly difficult. As growth continues, it is more important than ever to align workers' skills, knowledge and abilities with the needs of Maine employers.

The Competitive Skills Scholarship Program has concluded its ninth year and, since its inception, has helped many low-income Mainers meet the new employment demands placed upon them. This report offers findings for the 2016 program year and includes: participant career choice alignment with Maine's economic needs, education and training profiles and investments, program outcomes, participants' projected earnings, how graduates fared in the economy, and participant demographics. As more participants complete their studies and more data becomes available, data will drive continuous program improvement through policy review, providing insight into how to best help low-wage workers forge well-paying career paths while meeting Maine's demand for skilled workers.

## Background

The Competitive Skills Scholarship Program was established with bi-partisan support by the Maine Legislature in 2007, with the primary goal of providing eligible individuals with access to postsecondary education, training for industry-recognized credentials, and support that lead to skilled, well-compensated jobs with anticipated high employment demand. CSSP provides support to adults with family income lower than 200 percent of the federal

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<sup>1</sup> 26 MRSA §2033(10).

<sup>2</sup> Dana Evans, "The Maine Labor Market: Trends and Issues" (Center for Workforce Research and Information, Maine Department of Labor, September 2009) (<http://www.maine.gov/labor/lmis/pubs.html>) 23 Jan. 2010.

<sup>3</sup> Center for Workforce Research and Information, Maine Department of Labor, "Tracking the Recession" (<http://www.maine.gov/labor/lmis/recession.html>) 23 Jan. 2010.

poverty level; CSSP is financed by the state Competitive Skills Scholarship Fund.<sup>4</sup> The Fund is financed by contributions from employers; the cost of which is offset from their unemployment insurance (UI) taxes. Targeted outcomes from the program include: improvement of the economic well-being of participants, decreased reliance on financial support from public funds, and a workforce trained to meet ever changing employer demand.

## Skills Needed in Maine's Economy Gained by CSSP Enrollees

The employment outlook from 2014–2024 is for 0.8 percent growth and the continuation of a structural shift from production-related industries to service-providing industries. Net job growth is expected to be concentrated in education and health services, professional and business services, and leisure and hospitality industries. During this period, 13 of 22 occupational categories are expected to experience a net increase in jobs. Most new jobs and those with the fastest growth rates are expected to occur in service, professional and related, and management, business and financial occupational categories.

Occupational groups expected to grow at the fastest rates are: healthcare practitioners and technicians (9.5%), healthcare support (9.4%), computer and mathematical (8.8%), personal care and service (5.4%), and life, physical and social science (4.7%). Occupational groups expected to gain the most net jobs are: healthcare practitioners and technicians (4,129 jobs), healthcare support (2,119 jobs), food preparation and serving (1,734 jobs), personal care and service (1,646 jobs), and computer and mathematical (958 jobs).

**Education Attainment.** While the number of high school graduates enrolled in college the fall semester after high school graduation declined by 596, or 7 percent, between 2009 and 2014, the change reflected a decline in student numbers rather than the rate of college enrollment (62%)<sup>5</sup>. About 38.5 percent of Maine's adults 25 years or older have an associate's degree or higher, a rate slightly above the national average of 37.8 percent<sup>6</sup>. However, when we compare the higher education attainment rate of Maine young adults between the ages of 18 and 24 to the rest of New England, the gap is wider. For example, the percent of Maine young adults with bachelor's degrees in 2015 was 9.9 percent. This rate is lower than New England (excluding Maine) at 14.5 percent but similar to the national average of 9.8 percent.<sup>2</sup>

Most net job growth will occur in occupations that typically require some kind of post-secondary education for entry. About 25 percent of net new jobs will be in occupations that require post-secondary education less than a bachelor's degree; an additional 75 percent will require a bachelor's degree or higher.

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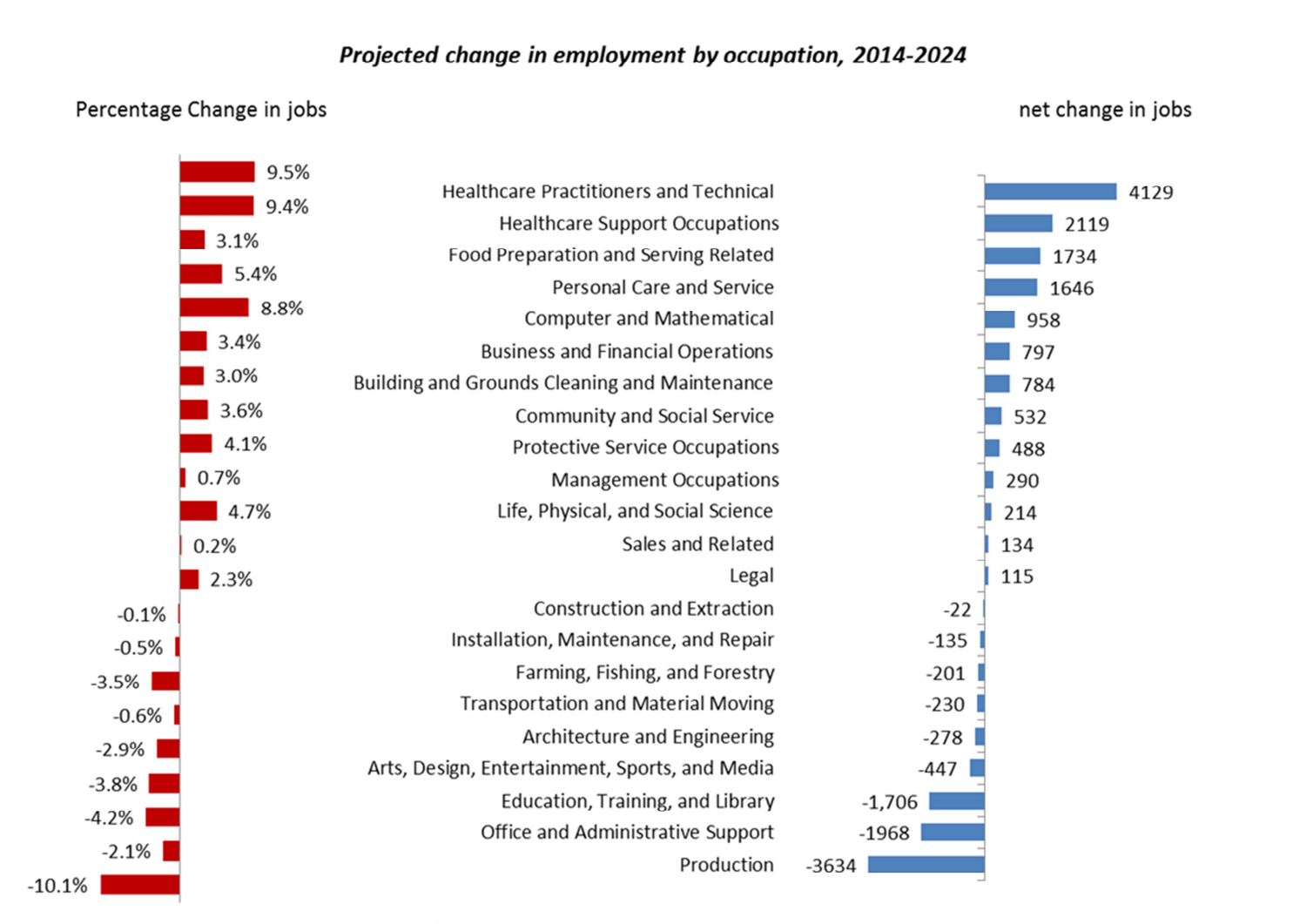
<sup>4</sup> Public Law 2007, ch. 352.

<sup>5</sup> "Maine High School Graduates: Trends in College-Going, Persistence, and Completion." Senator George J. Mitchell Scholarship Research Institute. Plimpton Research, Aug. 2015. Found at <https://mitchellinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/MaineCollegeGoing2015.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2011-2015

Demand is created by net growth and replacement of incumbent workers. Nearly nine out of ten annual openings are projected to be due to replacement rather than growth, creating opportunities even in industries and occupations with no expected net growth. Among occupations identified as high-wage and in-demand, more than half of anticipated annual openings are among occupations requiring post-secondary training or education.

The following employment projections represent the foundation for establishing the high-wage, in-demand occupations targeted by CSSP.



# Maine's Workforce Needs and Career Choices

Both individual economic self-sufficiency and the meeting of employers' needs for skilled labor are the desired outcomes of the CSSP program. Participants must be enrolled in training for employment in occupations that are identified by the Department as high-wage/in-demand (HWID) occupations in Maine that will result in a post-secondary certificate, degree, or industry-recognized credentials. Occupations on the current HWID list had a median wage above the median for all occupations in 2015 (\$16.69 per hour/\$34,710 per year) and were projected by the Department's Center for Workforce and Research Information (CWRI) to have at least 20 openings per year between 2014 and 2024.

The HWID list is reviewed by the State Workforce Board and approved by the Commissioner of Labor. Training for occupations not on the HWID list are not eligible for funding through the CSSP program except under certain employer-driven circumstances allowed by CSSP rules. Although these criteria help target CSSP to meet the needs of Maine's employers, further comparison of CSSP participants' occupational choices with job demand is necessary. The choice of an occupational goal by participants involves many factors, including the education and training programs being offered in their area, how much time they believe they can devote to the effort, and their individual skills and interests. It is, therefore, worthwhile to analyze the extent to which the career choices of CSSP participants reflect the job market.

The following chart compares the most frequently chosen occupations of CSSP participants to date, with projected job growth and job openings in those occupations in Maine. In some occupations (for example, education, training and library occupations) projected gross job growth of the occupation may be small or even zero, while projected annual job openings are large. This reflects the extent to which people are expected to leave or retire from the occupation, creating a significant demand for replacement workers. Thus, CSSP participants are preparing to meet the needs of both growing industries and industries that need newly trained replacement workers.

## Top Twelve Occupational Groups Chosen By CSSP Trainees

Occupational Classification	Total Number of CSSP Trainees Enrolled	Percent of Total Enrollment	Projected Gross Job Growth 2014-2024	Projected Annual Openings 2014-2024
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations	379	25.1%	29.6%	1,352
Community and Social Service Occupations	186	12.3%	3.8%	382
Management	157	10.4%	2.1%	1,014
Healthcare Support	106	7.0%	15.2%	699
Transportation and Material Moving	89	5.9%	0.0%	906
Production	77	5.1%	0.0%	830
Computer and Mathematical	74	4.9%	6.9%	264
Installation, Maintenance and Repair	74	4.9%	0.0%	670
Education, Training and Library	70	4.6%	0.0%	933
Architecture and Engineering	59	3.9%	0.0%	249
Business and Financial Operations	55	3.6%	5.7%	603
Construction and Extraction	52	3.4%	0.0%	591



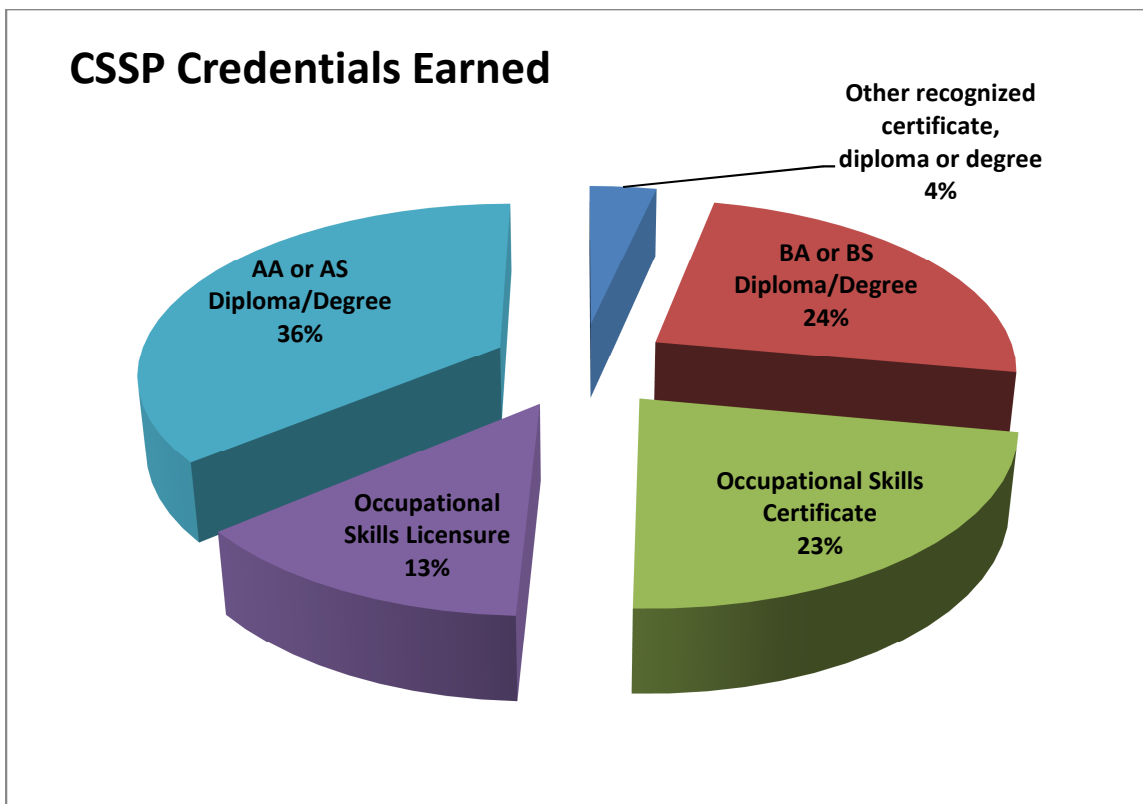
The distribution of career choices indicates that the job market is, in fact, a driving factor in CSSP participant choices. Of all projected new jobs, 45 percent are in health care occupations (practitioners and support). The popularity of training in health care professions by CSSP participants reflects Maine's high projected demand in the industry. (Note: The prior chart shows the top-twelve, major sector groups chosen by participants and reflects total enrollments in each group; it is not to suggest total program enrollments across all sectors.)

## CSSP Participants Status after Exit

Between 2007 and December 30, 2016, a total of 1,572 trainees were enrolled in CSSP. Of those 1,572 individuals, 1,167 have exited and are no longer receiving funding from the program, leaving a total of 405 individuals enrolled as of December 30, 2016. Report of wages earned after exit are not available for at least two quarters after exit. A review of the 1,114 trainees who exited CSSP as of June 30, 2016, shows that 921 (83%) were employed and earned median wages of \$9,522.92 during the first quarter after exit from CSSP.

### Exit Reasons

Successful program completion results in a post-secondary certificate, degree, or credential that is recognized by the trade or industry. Of the exited trainees, 573 individuals successfully advanced their credentials, with the credentials earned represented below.



	2007-08	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
CSSP Trainees Exited	38	75	111	185	165	168	131	163	131
Exit Percentage	3.3%	6.4%	9.5%	15.9%	14.1%	14.4%	11.2%	14.0%	11.2%

### Employment and Earnings – Are Participants Better Off After Training?

Of the 1,114 individuals who exited the program through June 30, 2016, 914 entered employment. The entered employment rate is 82 percent. It is expected that successful program completers will significantly increase their earnings, bolstering job retention and resiliency during times of economic downturn based on their marketability. In addition, most could expect health coverage and other benefits in their new occupation at a level never experienced before. It is also expected that successful completers will earn higher wages than those individuals who exited without completing their training programs. Both the assertion that successful trainees will significantly increase their wages and outpace the earnings of those who were exited from the program without earning a post-secondary degree or certificate is well supported by reviewing the data of exited CSSP trainees.

CSSP EXITERS through 6/30/16	*Projected Hourly/Annual Earnings Before Enrollment	*Projected Hourly/Annual Earnings 1 Year After Exit
Total Exits (1114)	\$8.91 / \$18,542.40	\$15.14 / \$31,492.32
Exiting Earning No Credential (579)	\$7.97 / \$16,572.88	\$11.86 / \$24,665.64
Exiting with Certificate, License or other Credential (213)	\$11.05 / \$22,980.36	\$15.97 / \$33,211.20
Exiting with College Degree (322)	\$9.32 / \$19,380.20	\$20.50 / \$42,630.56

\*Projected wages presented are based on the assumption that individuals are working 40 hours per week, 52 weeks of the year.

As expected, individuals exiting the program with a college degree realized the largest increase in wages after exit. For college graduates, their projected median annual wage more than doubled, increasing by \$23,250.36 or 119 percent the first year after exiting CSSP. Individuals exiting with a post-secondary credential other than a two- or four-year degree realized a \$10,230.84 annual median increase. In addition to earning higher wages, CSSP trainees who successfully complete their educational programs will have more opportunities for future advancement because of the education received through CSSP.

Participants who do not earn degrees or credentials during their enrollment period in CSSP exit for a variety of reasons including: to get a job to meet their families financial needs; because of medical or family care needs; or their family situation changes causing them to decide that earning a degree is no longer a priority. Those exiting CSSP without new credentials, show a median annual increase in wages of \$8,092.76. The increase in annual median wage suggests CSSP enrollment has a positive impact on individuals ability to earn better wages, regardless of whether or not they successfully completed the training program.

## MEDIAN AND TOTAL QUARTERLY WAGES EARNED AFTER EXIT FROM CSSP

The following chart depicts the wages of individuals exiting to employment in the first year following their participation in CSSP.

ALL EXITS SINCE 2007	Percent of Individuals Earning Wages	Individuals Earning Wages	Total Quarterly Median Wages	Median Quarterly Wages Earned
Prior to Enrollment	59%	851	\$5,182,735.74	\$6,090.17
After Exit	64%	921	\$7,951,966.65	\$9,522.92
EXITS BETWEEN JULY 1, 2013 AND JUNE 30, 2016				
Prior to Enrollment	75%	339	\$2,001,534.20	\$5,904.23
After Exit	84%	380	\$4,088,020.23	\$6,535.66

The chart above shows the median wages (or the middle value in an ordered sequence of wages) for CSSP trainees who have exited the program. For newly employed individuals, particularly for those who did not start working at the beginning of a quarter, reviewing median quarterly wage earnings, rather than average wage earnings, provides a more realistic view of earnings.

Between July 1, 2013 and June 30, 2016, a total of 455 individual trainees exited the CSSP program. Of those who exited, 380 (84%) exited to employment in the first year, earning a median quarterly wage of \$6,535.66, or a total of \$4,088,020.23 in quarterly wages earned.

**\*Please note that percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number.**

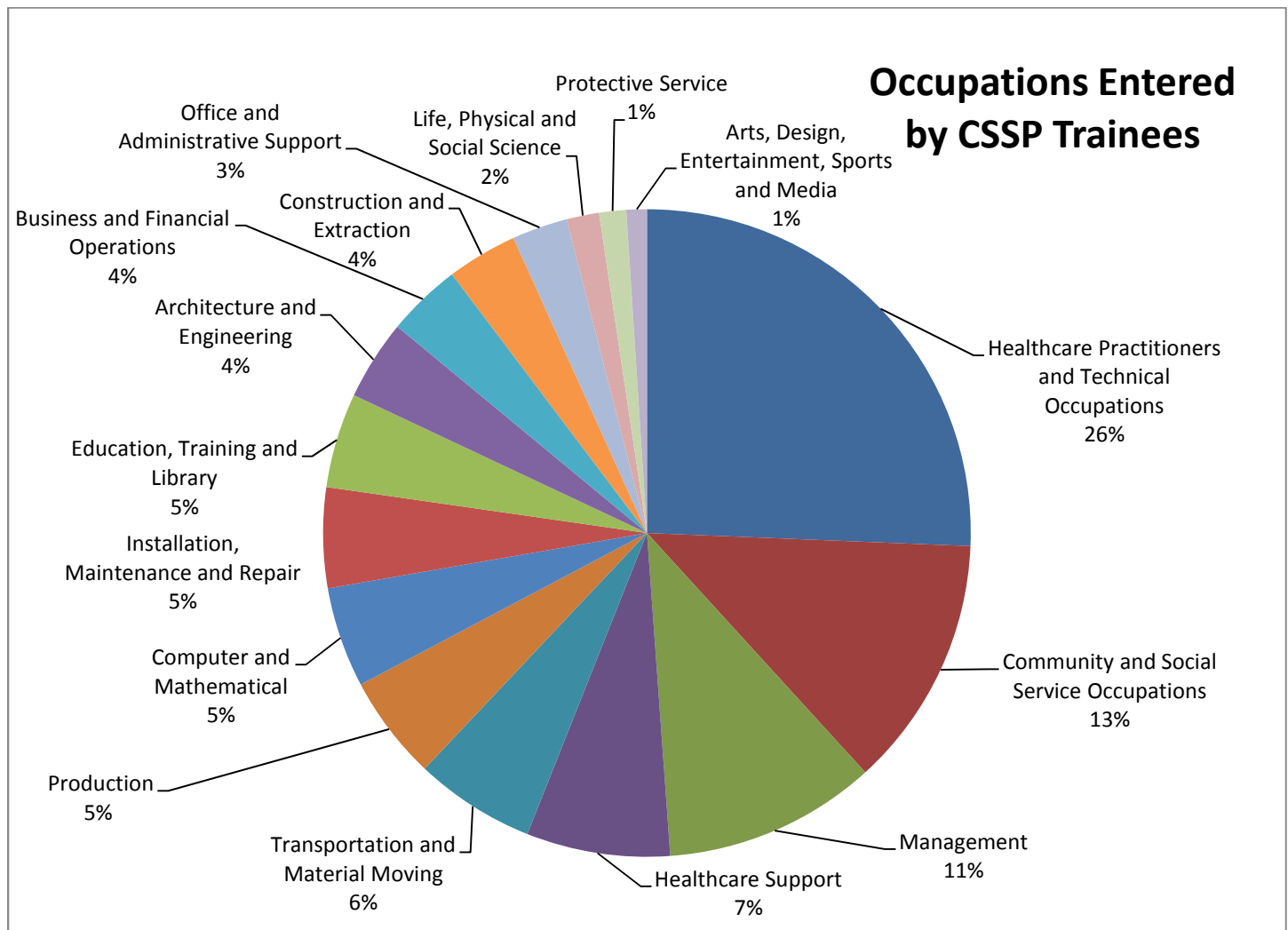
## Occupations Reported at Exit

The Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) System is a system developed by the U.S. government and used by the Maine Department of Labor to collect, classify, and compare occupations across data sets. The following chart shows 18 of the 22 different major occupational groups into which 705 individual CSSP participants entered employment upon their exit from CSSP. The following occupational groups not entered by CSSP trainees at exit have been removed from the table: food preparation and serving related titles, personal care and service occupations, building and ground cleaning and maintenance occupations as well as farming, fishing and forestry occupations. Wage data represents the average median wage and the lowest and highest ranges of pay for the number of participants in each SOC occupation depicted. Job titles are reported by the trainee at the time of exit from CSSP while the wage data is captured through the unemployment insurance database. The SOC reported at the time of exit and the median fourth quarter wage of all 705 individuals showing wages greater than \$1,000 for the quarter is depicted below.

Occupational Placements Reported & Median Wages Earned During the Fourth Quarter After Exit From CSSP	Count	Average Median-Wage	Minimum Median-Wage	Median Median-Wage	Maximum Median-Wage
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations	179	\$8,438.20	\$1,070.00	\$15,932.11	\$38,629.17
Community and Social Services Occupations	72	\$6,254.85	\$1,217.50	\$6,544.02	\$20,876.31
Healthcare Support Occupations	68	\$5,777.38	\$1,319.08	\$5,700.04	\$15,067.63
Management Occupations	61	\$8,047.11	\$1,295.30	\$7,029.34	\$36,580.77
Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	49	\$9,869.81	\$1,107.80	\$7,504.52	\$88,640.05
Production Occupations	48	\$10,640.32	\$1,472.76	\$9,140.65	\$42,201.39
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations	37	\$8,053.98	\$1,034.26	\$6,998.00	\$20,420.38
Computer and Mathematical Occupations	34	\$7,857.54	\$1,327.83	\$8,032.74	\$19,000.01
Architecture and Engineering Occupations	31	\$11,536.75	\$3,152.56	\$7,832.00	\$30,698.81
Education, Training, and Library Occupations	28	\$5,615.10	\$1,072.78	\$5,000.51	\$15,908.15
Construction and Extraction Occupations	24	\$6,960.65	\$1,839.30	\$7,904.00	\$10,774.65
Business and Financial Operations Occupations	24	\$6,606.47	\$1,839.30	\$6,763.66	\$14,154.00
Office and Administrative Support Occupations	22	\$6,066.76	\$2,529.00	\$5,409.23	\$18,036.38
Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations	9	\$6,205.81	\$1,185.85	\$5,316.31	\$15,666.06
Protective Service Occupations	8	\$6,972.02	\$2,465.65	\$7,385.09	\$10,665.00
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations	4	\$4,980.43	\$2,922.35	\$5,321.35	\$6,356.68
Legal Occupations	4	\$4,837.34	\$2,118.89	\$4,621.73	\$7,987.01
Sales and Related Occupations	3	\$3,884.92	\$2,377.29	\$4,260.75	\$5,016.73
	705	\$7,858.94	\$1,034.26	\$6,884.39	\$88,640.05

## Sector Occupations

This chart represents the percentage of participants entering employment in the major employment sectors listed. Sector distribution is consistent with employment projections, participant training outcomes, and jobs in demand. Sectors entered by less than 1 percent of CSSP trainees (Legal, Sales and Related, Food Preparation and Serving Related and Military Occupations) are not depicted on the chart.



## CSSP Exits by County



## CSSP Exits vs. Wage Earnings Reported in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter after Exit Since 2010

### 1 266 Individuals Exited

County	Number of trainees exited CSSP	Number of exiters w/wages 2 <sup>nd</sup> quarter	Percent of exiters earning wages in the 2 <sup>nd</sup> quarter after exit
Androscoggin	108	73	67.6%
Aroostook	183	130	71.0%
Cumberland	145	84	57.9%
Franklin	36	29	80.6%
Hancock	56	35	62.5%
Kennebec	104	79	75.9%
Knox	18	9	50.0%
Lincoln	19	17	89.5%
Oxford	61	46	75.4%
Penobscot	164	99	60.4%
Piscataquis	15	12	80.0%
Sagadahoc	25	15	60.0%
Somerset	68	47	69.1%
Waldo	22	15	68.2%
Washington	156	113	71.6%
York	86	60	69.8%
Statewide Data	1,266	863	68.17%

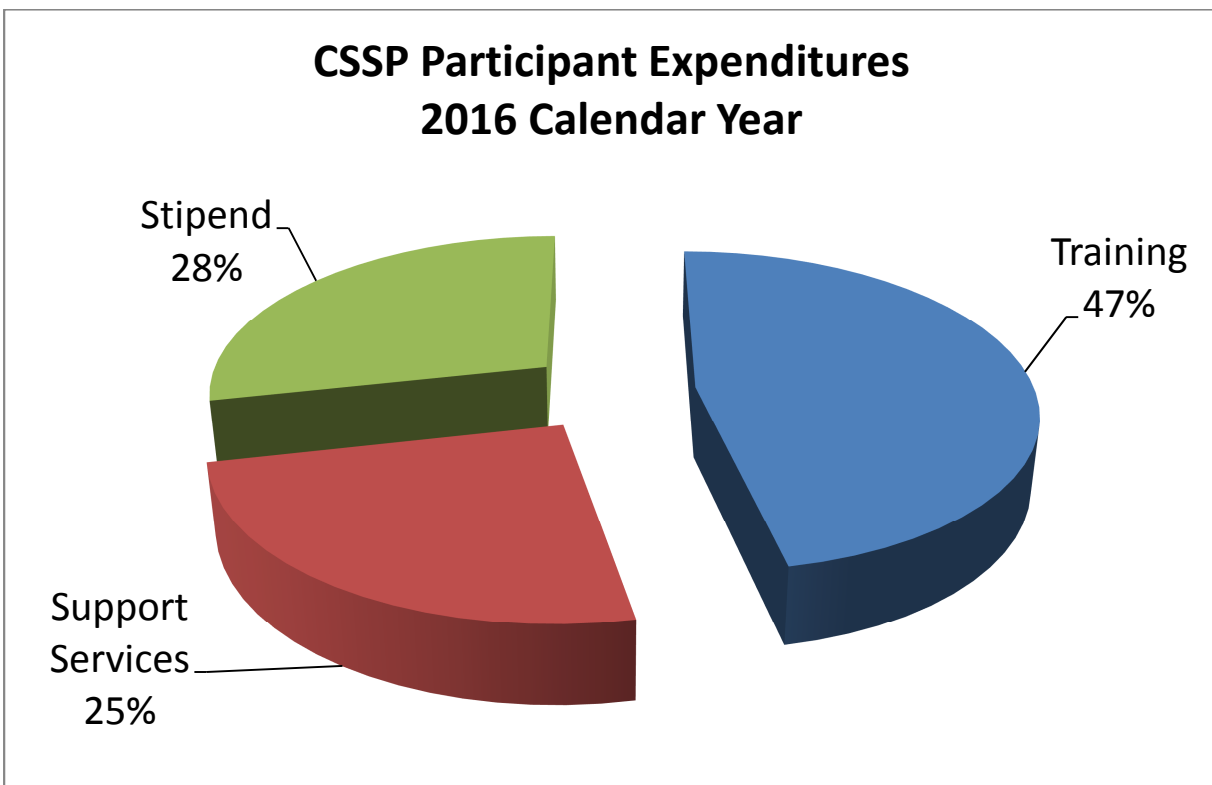
## CSSP Expenditures — Program and Administration

CSSP assists trainees with essentials such as tuition, fees, books, and supplies not otherwise covered by financial aid, as well as assistance with transportation and child care while attending training. A small stipend is available for those trainees with income below 125 percent of the federal poverty level and reserved for trainees who

have either exhausted their unemployment benefits or were determined ineligible for unemployment compensation. For individuals enrolled under 2010 CSSP rules, the maximum monthly stipend paid in 2016 was \$588. In 2016, 125 percent of the federal poverty level was \$30,375 for a family of four and the maximum monthly stipend available to eligible CSSP trainees enrolled under the 2016 program rules was \$353. The amount of the current stipend is determined annually by calculating one-fifth of the average unemployment benefit, while the stipend provided to participants enrolled under 2010 rules is one-third of the average unemployment benefit.

The average annual revenues directed toward the program, including interest, total \$3.3 million. Expenditures in calendar year 2016 totaled \$3.3 million while the average of expenditures between 2010 and 2016 was \$2.8 million per year. CSSP administration, individual career counseling, and case management of the trainees totaled \$723,085 in 2016, accounting for 22 percent of the total CSSP funds expended.

Between January 1, 2016 and December 31, 2016, a total of \$3,314,853 was spent on CSSP training, support services and administration, with \$2,591,768 or 78 percent of total funds spent directly on CSSP participants. Participant funding was primarily dedicated to training costs, transportation, income stipends, and childcare expenses incurred by CSSP participants. When reviewing the data presented below, it is important to note that almost all CSSP trainees enrolled in college degree programs receive federal PELL grants that, per CSSP rules, are applied to their tuition, books, and fees prior to accessing CSSP funds. In many cases, the PELL grants cover the majority of the direct training costs while the support services covered by CSSP are used to pay for the indirect yet real cost of participating in training. Without the support of CSSP, the PELL grants would not be sufficient to allow the CSSP trainees to pursue post-secondary education programs.



Rule changes in 2014 increased the percentage of CSSP funds spent on training expenses. The percentage of participant funds spent on training increased from 44 percent in calendar year 2015 to 47 percent in 2016. As

the 30 remaining individuals enrolled in CSSP under 2010 rules exit the program, it is anticipated the percentage of funds spent on CSSP trainee support services (primarily childcare, transportation and stipend) will remain greater than the percentage of funds spent on training costs, though the two will continue to be closer to a 50/50 split than in previous years, when supportive service costs outweighed training costs by more than 2:1.

## Targeted CSSP Programs

**The CSSP Business Program (CSSP-B)** first piloted in 2014 has served 88 trainees through 2016. In 2016 the CSSP-B was expanded by adding two dedicated consultants, located in the Greater Portland Area and Bangor CareerCenters, who provide outreach and services to businesses in all 16 Maine counties. The program is designed to help businesses recruit qualified new-hires or advance low-wage, current employees to gain the education and training they need to advance to high-wage, hard-to-fill occupations within their organizations. CareerCenter staff work directly with businesses to help identify their workforce needs and trainees who meet business and CSSP eligibility guidelines. Since 2014, CSSP Business Program trainees have a 69 percent completion rate and exited to employment with an average second quarter wage of \$10,209.10 projected to an average \$19.63 per hour.

CSSP Business Program trainees are either CSSP income-eligible incumbent employees in entry-level jobs or income-eligible individuals recruited directly through the CareerCenter. Businesses choose which CSSP eligible applicants to accept into the cohort-style training program and receive up to \$6,000 per CSSP enrolled trainee to offset the costs of the business-specific training. At the conclusion of training, successful trainees earn an industry-recognized certificate or degree, leading to a new job and increased wages.

If the occupation the business needs to fill is not on the approved high-wage, high-demand CSSP list, a business can petition the Commissioner of Labor for the occupation to be added to the list. Individual CSSP-B applicants may also provide a letter of support from a business, supporting the advancement of the individual toward their career pathway. At the end of the participant's training, the employer agrees to consider the applicant to fill openings that would pay at least \$14 per hour. The CSSP Business Program is working and is gaining momentum in Maine's business community as a way to upskill their entry-level workforce while allowing workers to earn while they learn.

Medical Assistant training designed for MaineGeneral Medical Center in Augusta is a current project of the CSSP Business cohort-training model. Through social media and targeted email notification to individuals registered in the Maine JobLink, 253 individuals attended an information session on becoming a medical assistant. One-hundred twenty-five chose to take the next step in the process: screening for 10<sup>th</sup> grade math and reading competency with our adult education partners, and the completion of an online, work-interest profiler to determine whether they were a good match for being successful as medical assistants. When recruitment and assessments were complete, 25 individuals (12 MaineGeneral Medical Center employees and 13 potential new hires) were ultimately enrolled in a fast-tracked, five-month, compressed-curriculum medical assistant class. When their coursework is complete, they will have an opportunity to take a national medical assistant certification. Successful trainees will be interviewed for jobs as medical assistant apprentices. The paid apprenticeship training program will last for a year and include mentorship, structured on-the-job learning and additional classroom activities. At the completion of their experience, the workers will also earn an apprenticeship certificate indicating the attainment of journeyworker status as medical assistants, and they will be employable in any medical facility or physician's office requiring certified medical assistants.



**The CSSP Bridge Program**, legislated in July of 2015 with rule changes adopted in December 2015, allows the co-enrollment of Bridge Year Program students into CSSP. The program was piloted in 2016 with 49 seniors from seven Maine high schools who are enrolled in the Bridge Year Program and meet the eligibility requirements of CSSP. The Bridge Year Program offers a cohort-based educational experience. Student cohorts are dually enrolled in high school and college courses and attend their regional Career and Technical Education (CTE) School where they participate in training for a field of their choice. CSSP Bridge students will obtain 24+ college credits (at a cost of \$40 per credit) by high school graduation through dual enrollment. These credits will be transferable to all University of Maine System schools, all Maine Community College System schools, and may be transferable to other public and private post-secondary institutions. Students enrolled in CSSP Bridge will graduate from high school and enter college with a year of college courses behind them. CSSP funding and CareerCenter consultants will support them as they pursue an associate's degree and/or complete a bachelor's degree option in less than four years.

**The CSSP Food Supplement Employment and Training Program (CSSP-FSET)** is a collaborative effort between the Maine Department of Labor's (MDOL) CSSP and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and has led to a partnership between the two agencies to assist some of Maine's most financially needy individuals. CSSP-FSET is intended to accelerate achievement of employment and independence from Maine's public services. The program provides training support for up to 75 food supplement recipients who seek training and education for more highly skilled jobs. The target population is identified as food supplement recipients who are able bodied adults without dependents (ABAWD) or work registrants. The CSSP-FSET program has assisted 30 trainees to date who are working towards earning an industry-recognized certification and/or an associate's degree. A total of \$65,704.49 in funding from the DHHS ABAWD program was leveraged by CSSP-FSET.

## Collaboration and Leveraged Resources

CSSP program administrators pursue opportunities to collaborate and align available resources within and outside the Maine Department of Labor to support CSSP service productivity. Most participants leverage other resources (such as co-enrollment in federal Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act-funded programs, utilizing federal PELL grants or other available non-federal grants) in combination with CSSP funds to pay for their post-secondary education.

## CSSP Administration

The Competitive Skills Scholarship Program is administered through Maine's CareerCenter system, a network of 12 comprehensive Centers located throughout the state. Since launched in 2007 as a small pilot project, the program has been overwhelmed with applications for a limited number of slots. In 2016, the CSSP application process was changed from the traditional CSSP lottery system to an open enrollment system. Currently, each county is allocated a specified number of slots, and CSSP case managers are asked to maintain the numbers assigned to their counties by managing enrollment throughout the year. Moving the CSSP to an open enrollment process has helped ensure that CSSP is serving the maximum number of trainees with a limited number of full-time equivalents. CSSP has served an average of 451 individuals each year. In 2016, a total of 119 new CSSP trainees were enrolled and 427 individuals were served.

CALENDAR YEAR	2007-08	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
New Enrollments	369	196	151	124	119	25	206	263	119
Number Served	369	518	597	606	449	312	339	439	427

A total of 650 CSSP slots were available during calendar year 2016. Regular CSSP slots are distributed to counties based on the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) fund-allocation formula provided to states annually by the U. S. Department of Labor. Applicants are chosen by random selection to fill the predetermined open slots in their region. In addition to the 400 regular CSSP slots, 200 CSSP-Business slots and 50 CSSP-Bridge slots were available in 2016.

2016 Regular CSSP Slots Available by County – Total 400

COUNTY	SLOTS	% of TOTAL	COUNTY	SLOTS	% of TOTAL
Androscoggin	31	7.8%	Oxford	22	5.5%
Aroostook	30	7.5%	Piscataquis	8	2.0%
Cumberland	60	15.0%	Penobscot	50	12.5%
Franklin	12	3.0%	Sagadahoc	8	2.0%
Hancock	21	5.3%	Somerset	25	6.3%
Kennebec	33	8.3%	Waldo	14	3.5%
Knox	10	2.5%	Washington	17	4.3%
Lincoln	9	2.3%	York	50	12.5%

# Program Eligibility

To be eligible for the program, applicants must be at least 18 years of age\*, have the aptitude to undertake and complete the selected occupation-specific training for high-demand employment, not possess a marketable post-secondary degree, and have income less than 200 percent of the federal poverty level. First and foremost, CSSP eligibility is an income means-based program. Each year, updated federal poverty income guidelines are included in the eligibility determination process.

## 2016 CSSP Income Guidelines

Annual Household Income		
Household Size	125% Poverty Determines Stipend Eligibility	200% Poverty Determines Program Eligibility
1	\$14,850	\$23,760
2	\$20,025	\$32,040
3	\$25,200	\$40,320
4	\$30,375	\$48,600
5	\$35,550	\$56,880
6	\$40,725	\$65,160
7	\$45,913	\$73,460
8	\$51,113	\$81,780
For each Additional Person Add	\$5,200	\$8,320

*\*CSSP rules adopted in 2015 allow high school juniors and seniors enrolled in the Bridge Year Program to be accepted into CSSP provided they meet all other eligibility requirements.*

## Demographics of CSSP Participants

CSSP was intended by the Maine Legislature to reach low-income workers who were likely to have a history of receiving unemployment compensation and who need the support of CSSP to succeed in gaining skills for better, more stable career paths. The data indicates CSSP is reaching this intended population.

A review of individuals enrolled in the program since 2012 shows that 73 percent (703) of CSSP enrollees had household income below 100 percent of the federal poverty level (currently \$15,930 annually for a household of two), well below the eligibility limit for the program of 200 percent of the federal poverty level.

Data on 1,572 CSSP participants enrolled since 2007 shows that 59 percent (928) are female; the average age of CSSP participants is 35, ranging from 17 to 67 years of age; the average number of people in a CSSP household is 2.46. In analyzing the employment status reported by participants enrolled, the following was identified: 62 percent (974) were unemployed, 5 percent (79) had received an official notice of layoff and 33 percent (519) participants were employed.

# Individual Success Stories

The individual success stories of CSSP trainees like Emily Jones, Coco Kacadi and Allanah White provide insight into how the program positively impacts individual earning abilities.

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## Competitive Skills Scholarship Client Emily Jones, Trescott Township, Maine —Nurse



I grew up with a disabled deaf mother, a brother, and a father who was the primary breadwinner. My father had come from a family with six children and did not have a lot while growing up; my mother also comes from a similar background. During my childhood, despite my father's efforts to make a decent living as a truck driver, we had to rely on various forms of government assistance. I remember one winter listening to my parents talk about eating or having heat. This was a lot for a child to hear and try to understand. The lack of money seemed to run our lives, limiting what we could do, where we could go and how we could get there. I was determined to make a better life for myself and knew that getting a good education followed by landing a steady, good paying job was what I needed to do.

In 2012, I was graduating high school and starting to focus on choosing a college that fit me best. The spring of my senior year in high school, I was accepted into Husson Universities Nursing Program, and at the University of Maine at Orono, for pre-nursing. On top of trying to figure out where to go to school, I was also feeling overwhelmed about how to pay for classes and books. My parents were not going to be able to help me with school, despite the fact that my father had started a new and better paying job. They still faced a lot of debt from the previous years of unemployment. I was encouraged by my mother to go to the CareerCenter to discuss my options.

I met with CareerCenter Consultant Janie Small and she encouraged me to consider UMaine, because it was significantly less expensive with a lot more financial aid available. I cried in Janie's office because I had my heart set on attending Husson, but she helped me realize that attending UMaine made more sense financially. Janie then helped me find various scholarships, including the Downeast Scholarship, and the Competitive Skills Scholarship Program, which allowed me to earn my college degree without having to take out a single student loan. I graduated from UMaine's nursing school in December of 2016 with my Bachelors of Science in Nursing. I have a job lined up at Eastern Maine Medical Center, where I will have the opportunity to take care of many people from Washington County. More importantly I am breaking the cycle of poverty that has plagued my family for generations. I am a first generation college student, the first in my family to pursue a post-secondary degree. I will be able to provide for my own family without worrying about whether to put food on the table or heat the house. The support provided to me through the Competitive Skills Scholarship Program allowed me to fully concentrate on my studies and not worry about having to work during tough semesters.

*February 2017 Update – Emily passed her National Council Licensure Exam (NCLEX) in late January and was recently hired at Eastern Maine Medical Center in Bangor earning \$29.60 an hour.*

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## Competitive Skills Scholarship Program for Business (CSSP-B) Manufacturing Technician Program

Clients Coco Kacadi, Portland, Maine and Alanah White, Jay, Maine

Several manufacturing employers in the Greater Portland area expressed difficulty in filling positions with qualified job seekers. CSSP-B created the opportunity for those employers to be instrumental in working with Northeast Technical Institute (NTI) to develop the training to prepare the entry level workforce they need. The 11-week, accelerated, certificate training program is broad enough to allow a variety of employers to benefit from hiring program graduates and comprehensive enough to prepare students with skills and confidence for steady employment in jobs that pay \$14 or more an hour to start.



Coco Kacadi was unemployed when he attended an information session at the CareerCenter to learn about the training offered and to meet with employers to learn about the field of manufacturing. Coco is a New Mainer, who studied to be a lawyer in the Democratic Republic of Congo and was very determined to start a new life. Coco was unable to use his law degree from the Congo in Maine and saw training as a manufacturing technician as a good start to a new career. He qualified for CSSP-B and received a letter from an employer with a conditional job offer prior to beginning training. Coco is now employed, earning \$14 an hour at New England Tech Air in Scarborough. In his words, "I hope this program will help many others to find a steady job."

Alanah White is a high-energy young woman who had tried everything from picking strawberries to enrolling in a university degree program. She loves being busy and working in production was what she wanted. After her training at NTI, she had several job offers and landed a great job at Fiber Materials in Biddeford earning \$16 an hour. She couldn't be happier and was featured in the latest NTI newsletter. In her words, "I wanted to say thank you for all of your help and everything you've done for me. Thank you for the opportunity to go to school to get further education and a better foot in the door when it comes to getting a good job."



## Looking Ahead

The Bureau of Employment Services continues to work toward the overarching CSSP goal of providing eligible individuals with access to postsecondary education, training for industry-recognized credentials, and support leading to skilled, well-compensated jobs with anticipated high employment demand.

Through the Maine Department of Labor's expanded outreach to individual businesses and industry sectors, the CSSP program and particularly the CSSP Business program are helping the State's workforce development system (WDS) to reach several strategic objectives: increasing the relevance of the WDS to employers and using aligned workforce funding to produce an educated and skilled workforce.

CSSP will begin its ninth full year in operation since it was launched in the fall of 2007. By the end of 2017, it is expected the program will have enrolled close to 1,700 people who aspire to improve their work skills,

competitive position in the Maine labor market, and financial stability due to improved earnings. The program is meeting an otherwise unmet need for skilled workers in high-wage, high-growth occupations, helping to fill a gap for Maine businesses.

## Conclusion

Our ongoing experience with CSSP has provided important information. We know from the large number of applications compared to the number of openings available, that it remains in high demand. The benefits of postsecondary education and training are both tangible and intangible. Employers who are hiring will be more inclined towards the more educated, better trained, and more experienced job seekers as they will have the competencies (critical thinking, problem solving and analytic skills, communication and interpersonal skills, collaboration and ability to execute, flexibility and adaptability, information processing, and capacity for change) most important for success—individual and corporate—in the twenty-first century (Deprez/Butler, 1/2012).

CSSP is one of the few remaining state-funded programs allowing flexibility to support our state's specific training and employment challenges. The program's benefits go beyond financial, making it possible for low-income adults to begin a journey on a career pathway leading to self-sufficiency for themselves and their families. In addition, education better-protects workers from losing their jobs during recessions, as economic downturns have the greatest impact on workers with the least education.

CSSP is a successful program, helping to strengthen the Maine economy by helping businesses meet the demand for skilled workers while offering workers higher wages and better employment outcomes. Maine's young people are struggling with disproportionately high unemployment, low-wage jobs, rising college costs, and spiraling student debt. Multiple closures in Maine's manufacturing industry in recent years have caused many middle-aged workers to return to school to gain new skills and embark on new careers. The training and support received through CSSP help set eligible Maine workers on promising pathways to well-paying, middle-class jobs.

CSSP was designed by the Maine Legislature to help participants prepare for high-wage, skilled jobs that are in demand by our employers. Analysis of participants' training choices in light of projected job openings indicates the program is successfully connecting people with training for jobs that are in demand in Maine. Further, it is widely recognized that persons with more education and training increase their chances of employment in good paying jobs, and they possess the marketability to keep those jobs or advance in their professions. Finally, participants themselves have provided important insights into the critical role that CSSP is playing in helping them succeed.

## Competitive Skills Scholarship Program Brief Overview

Program Start-Year	2007
Total Served	1,572
Total Served 2016	427
Median quarterly wage at Entrance	\$4,636
Median quarterly wage at Exit	\$7,859
Total Median Quarterly Earnings of Participants Prior to Enrollment	\$4,423,970
Total Median Quarterly Earnings of Exiting Participants	\$8,770,608

Expense Summary 2016	
Training	\$1,214,212
Support Services	\$639,760
Stipend	\$737,866
Administration	\$723,085
TOTAL Expenditure 2016	\$3,314,853

Average Costs	
Average Cost Training	\$3,153.62
Average Cost Support	\$1,545.31
Average Cost Stipend	\$2,114.23
Average Cost Administration	\$1,179.58
Average Cost Per Person	\$7,609.26

Allocations and Revenue	
Average Annual Allocation	\$3,500,000
Revenue Balance as of 12/31/16	\$4,228,450

Demographics	
Female/Male	59%/41%
Age Average	35 years
Age Median	33 years
Average Number of Family Members	2.46
Range of Number of Family Members	1 – 10 members

Employment Status at Application	
Employed	33%
Unemployed	62%
Employed But with Notice of Layoff	5%